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Editorial

Response to the anti-peasant CARP: Agrarian revolution!

The US-Arroyo regime's move to extend the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) for another five years is violative of the class interest of the peasant masses who have long been desirous of genuine land reform. The US-Arroyo regime has no other objective but to continue deceiving and oppressing the peasantry and keep on pocketing huge funds meant for CARP. In previous years, fund allocations for CARP served as one of the biggest milch cows of bureaucrat capitalists.

Like all the previous land reform programs of the reactionary state, CARP is bogus and has no real relation to agrarian reform. The fake land reform program merely served to further intensify land monopoly in the country, and allow foreigners to own land pursuant to imperialist "globalization" policies. Claims by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) that 80% of agricultural lands have been distributed to the farmers is a big lie. The vast majority of peasants remain landless or land-starved and continue to be victims of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation.

To evade the genuine distribution of land to the tillers, landlords devised numerous schemes in CARP's name, including the division of vast tracts of land into small parcels and so-called land redistribution to bogus beneficiaries through the Voluntary Land Transfer/Direct Payment Scheme, Leaseback/Buy-back Scheme, Crop Conversion/Land Conversion Scheme, Contract-growing Scheme, Joint Venture Scheme, Co-operative Scheme, Corporative Scheme, Stock Distribution Option Scheme and related schemes.

CARP worsened the rampant land grabbing of farm-



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ers' lands in different parts of the country. Concentration of lands in the hands of old and new landlords intensified, swelling the number of landless farmers. Landlords now control over 80% of the 13 million hectares of agricultural lands in the country, while more than 80% of peasants in the country do not have their own land to till.

Malacañang and its cabal only utilized CARP to enrich themselves. A big portion of over a hundred billion pesos allocated for CARP since 1988 merely went to the thieves in Malacañang and its so-called chief implementors.

Moreover, Arroyo and her cohorts feasted on the P27-billion fund sourced from the Marcoses' ill-gotten wealth sequestered in 2004. The sequestered funds were intended for CARP as mandated by law. The insatiable Arroyo camp is now eyeing with gusto the more than P100 billion budget for CARP's five-year extension.

The cry to end CARP is attendant to the farmers' clamor for genuine land reform. It is advocated by all revolutionary forces and democratic sectors of society.

As contribution to the demo-

cratic struggles for genuine land reform, progressive solons in Congress are pushing for the passage into law of the Genuine Agrarian Reform Program (GARP). The bill is expected to meet with stiff opposition by the Arroyo regime in connivance with the big landlords who dominate Congress.

Agrarian revolution is the revolutionary movement's key solution to widespread landlessness and land starvation in the country. Learning from the rich history of peasant struggles in the Philippines, genuine land reform will only be realized through agrarian revolution. Agrarian revolution aims to liberate the peasant masses from feudal and semifeudal exploitation and oppression.

Agrarian revolution is the principal feature of the national democratic struggle currently being waged by the armed revolutionary forces across the archipelago. Through this, the peasant majority are enjoined to take part as the main revolutionary force and in the formation of the basic alliance of the proletariat and peasantry.

In guerrilla zones and fronts across the archipelago, the revolu-

tionary peasant masses implement various levels of the revolutionary land reform program. The minimum program being implemented on a wide scale involves the gradual reduction of land rent, the elimination of usury, wage increases for agricultural workers, attainment of just farmgate prices for agricultural products, improvement of different forms and levels of cooperation and various socio-economic, educational and cultural programs for the benefit and welfare of the peasant majority.

In areas where the armed revolutionary forces are relatively strong and the enemy forces are weak, certain components of the maximum program for land reform are already being implemented. In these areas, farmers are given rights to till for free lands that have been confiscated from despotic landlords and land grabbers, or idle or abandoned lands. This they do under the direct supervision of their agricultural cooperatives and organs of political power. This program proves to be effective and exceedingly gainful for the beneficiaries. There will be more of these cases as the revolutionary movement expands and advances and total victory becomes imminent.

As a result of advancing genuine land reform and the victories achieved therein, millions of peasants are joining revolutionary organizations and becoming active participants in revolutionary struggles. Thousands of the more advanced elements from their ranks are taking up arms and joining the people's army. With the revolutionary movement's continuous advance, agrarian revolution will spread like wildfire, gradually defeating feudal and semifeudal power in the countryside and fueling the advance of people's war across the land. **AB**



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angbayan@yahoo.com

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News 11

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People's caravan afoot in Metro Manila

The People's Caravan is currently under way in Metro Manila, visiting selected communities to conduct education and cultural activities to raise awareness about poverty, corruption and human rights.

This caravan spearheaded by People's Chain, an alliance of various organizations such as Youth Revolt and Sining Bugkos, church people and local community organizations has already made the rounds of various communities in Tondo, Manila; Bukid Area or North Caloocan; and South Caloocan.

The caravan commenced with a short program at the Luneta on April 25. Wherever it went, it was warmly welcomed by community residents. Church bells tolled and band music played in greeting at the Sto. Niño Church in Tondo, Manila. A motorcade, accompanied by the drum and bugle corps of Bagong Barrio was launched in South Caloocan, passing through Dagat-dagatan, Letre, Navotas and Malabon.

The caravan sponsors a variety of activities such as *aralang bayan* (people's school) and "kapihan" (discussions over cups of coffee) composed of lectures, workshops and discussions on corruption issues, poverty, youth issues, human rights, the rice crisis and other burning issues. Workshops on theater, music and visual arts are also part of the program.

Church people are active in the events. Priests say mass and conduct reflections upholding the theme "Truth, Justice and Change." Joey de Venecia, an NBN-ZTE deal key witness, joined the caravan and spoke at a forum in Tondo, Manila.

Delegates to the caravan also went around hundreds of houses in various communities.

Meanwhile, a "lugaw protest" was carried out in the Tondo and Bukid areas, an activity marked by participants simultaneously having a meal of porridge as an act of protest against the Arroyo regime for the worsening food crisis in the country. In South Caloocan, a "people's theater" was undertaken where short films on political killings, victims of involuntary disappearance and the rice crisis, among others, were shown in public.

The final evenings were marked by Gabi ng Makabayang Sining (GAMAS) or "night of patriotic art" where cultural presentations by art workshop students and guests were rendered.

The People's Caravan is set to proceed to more communities in Metro Manila in the coming weeks. **AB**

Arroyo's cunning criticisms of power rate hikes

The Arroyo regime is unrelenting in riding on denunciations by the broad masses of the people of excessive electric charges. The regime uses this issue in a vain attempt to divert the people's attention from the worsening crises and controversies and issues confronting Arroyo. The power rates issue is also being utilized by the regime to conceal its own principal accountability for high electrical charges. The regime directly attacks the Lopez family which is a known critic of its rule and has attempted to wrest control of Meralco to make the latter serve as a milch cow for Arroyo and her clique.

In the MERALCO stockholders' meeting on May 27, Winston Garcia, president and general manager of the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) attempted to seize the majority seats in the company's Board of Directors (BOD) by conniving with Jesus Martinez, Officer-in-Charge of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Garcia arranged for the SEC to issue a temporary restraining order on elections for a new board after he questioned the validity of proxy votes largely controlled by the Lopezes. MERALCO bluntly disregarded the SEC's order, pushing through with the elections. The Lopezes handily won the majority seats in the BOD.

Malacañang has nonetheless been insistent-ly hounding MERALCO. It has called for the cancellation of the P1 trillion sweetheart deals between MERALCO and other Lopez companies that supply a huge part of the power MERALCO distributes to its consumers. It has also called for the removal of "system loss" charges (electricity lost due to theft and pilferage and charges for MERALCO's own electrical consumption which it passes on to the consumers) from consumers' electric bills and the immediate refund of deposits for electric meters that MERALCO has illegally collected from consumers, among other exorbitant fees.

The Lopezes have retaliated by demanding from the Arroyo government the immediate removal of VAT and the excessive royalty tax it imposes on power sourced from the country's own natural resources. Both taxes are being shoul-

dered by the hapless consumers. While the government imposes a tariff rate of only ₱0.17 per kWh on imported bunker fuel and carbon and ₱0.29 for imported natural gas utilized in producing electricity, a royalty tax of ₱1.79 per kWh is imposed on locally sourced natural gas and ₱0.70 per kWh on local geothermal steam. The 12% VAT on electric bills effectively pushes up charges by ₱0.21 per kWh. The Lopezes disclosed that electric bills will be reduced by as much as ₱2.00 per kWh if excessive taxes collected by the government are removed. **AB**

Arroyo's publicity gimmicks

The regime has shamelessly designed maneuvers to gain public sympathy amid the severe economic crisis suffered by the people. The Presidential Task Force on Energy recently announced the allotment of a ₱2 billion "subsidy" for an estimated 1.9 million poor MERALCO consumers (those whose monthly electrical consumption does not exceed 100 kWh). The task force will reportedly be giving away ₱1,000 annually to each qualified beneficiary until 2010. The obvious tack is to make MERALCO appear stingy while projecting Arroyo as sympathetic to the poor majority of power consumers.

This maneuver was immediately succeeded by a similar "subsidy" gimmick, this time with farmers, with the reactionary government distributing a ₱1,500 annual fertilizer subsidy to every peasant until 2010.

These fund doleouts are useless and will not provide relief to the people for as long as pro-imperialist and antipeople economic policies are being implemented. Like other "subsidies" in the past, these moneys will only be used as milch cows to generate funds for the next elections. A case in point is the ₱2.9 billion Ginintuang Masaganang Ani project, which gave rise to the "fertilizer fund scam" involving Jocelyn "Joc-joc" Bolante. Under this scheme, fertilizer funds were diverted to Arroyo's 2004 election kitty.

Expect the allocations for the newfangled "subsidies" to be used for corruption, bribery and vote-buying in the elections. **AB**

Unabated increases in oil and rice prices fuel the people's rage

Incessant surges in the prices of oil, rice and other commodities continue to condemn the people to abject poverty and fuel their fury against the ruling regime.

In May, the official inflation rate reached 9.6% as food prices rose without letup. Relentless oil price hikes likewise helped trigger the inflationary spiral, setting a record high since 1999.

The latest oil price hike of ₱1.50 per liter on May 31 was the 11th since the start of 2008. Since then, gasoline prices have gone up by ₱9.50 per liter and diesel and kerosine by ₱10 per liter. The price of premium unleaded gasoline rose continuously for the past 10 days, reaching ₱55.15 from the previous ₱50.67 per liter. Diesel prices swelled to ₱48.00, up from ₱42.91 per liter; and kerosine, ₱53.80 from ₱48.30 per liter, inclusive of the 12% VAT. The price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), on the other hand, grew by ₱1 per liter.

Rice prices rose in tandem with that of petroleum products, leading to rationing and panic buying of the staple in some areas of Mindanao. On June 1, thousands of people rushed to Cagayan de Oro's biggest public market after hearing rumors that National Food Authority (NFA)-supplied rice selling at ₱18.25 per kilo would be replaced by a more expensive variety.

The price of "well-milled rice" ranges from ₱45 to ₱51 a kilo. In Davao Oriental, rice prices rose from ₱38 on May 29 to ₱40 on May 30 and ₱42 on May 31, or an increase of 10.5% over a two-day period. The price of premium grade corn staple has gone up to ₱31.50 a kilo while yellow corn sells at ₱18.50 per kilo. Prices of vegetables have likewise increased.

A recent Asian Development Bank (ADB) study showed that about 23 million Filipinos or 26% of the population earning ₱67 a day or less bear the brunt of oil and food price increases. The study also revealed that 2.3 million Filipinos are forced into poverty for every 10% increase in food prices. **AB**



Ruthless exploitation of rice farmers in Eastern Visayas

As in other parts of the country, the Eastern Visayan region, composed of Samar, Leyte, Biliran and small neighboring islands is reeling from an intense rice and food crisis. Farmers in the region have been in the throes of feudal and semifeudal exploitation and oppression for a hundred years, preventing any agricultural development. Worse, the imperialist “globalization” policy of agricultural liberalization destroys the region’s capacity to ensure adequate food supply for its people. The food crisis in the region is even made worse by the onslaught of natural calamities and man-made disasters wrought by militarization.

Almost 25% of total agricultural lands is used for rice production. Half of all rice lands, however, are found in the mountainous areas of the region and lack irrigation. Irrigation facilities are largely concentrated in the plains of Leyte and some parts of Biliran. A mere 10% of the estimated 93,000 hectares of rice lands in Samar is irrigated.

Parcels of land tilled by the farmers have continuously reduced in size. From an average of 3.37 hectares in 1971, the typical size of rice farms had shrunk to a mere 2.16 hectares 20 years later. Currently, the vast majority of rice farms are less than a hectare.

The production of rice and other crops in the region remains largely backward, relying mainly on manual farming methods. In Samar, almost 90% of land preparation for rice planting is done through “*payatak*”—tilling the land by having a carabao tread on the soil—and “*hasok*” or the broadcast method of sowing. Farm implements—bolos and sickles—are rudimentary, so much so that the use of a plow is considered a relatively advanced farming technique. Only farmers living near town centers and cities get to use hand tractors and other simple machines such as threshers and blowers, which are usually rented from merchants.

The region should be self-sufficient in rice. Unfortunately, howev-

er, farmers get to consume only 10% of the total harvest. Ninety percent of their produce is automatically allotted to debt payments even before the harvest season has begun. In other cases, farmers need to sell their harvest to raise cash to pay their loans. Farmers thus have to start buying rice for their own consumption not long after the harvest season. With farmers having very little cash to spend for rice and other food items, hunger is widespread in the region.

The backward state of agriculture, the intense poverty and serious food crisis suffered by the peasant masses in the region stem from the farmers’ severe feudal and semifeudal exploitation.

Up to 59% of rice lands are owned and controlled by a handful of landlords and cultivated by tenants. Only 17% of rice lands in the region are being tilled by owner-cultivators.

Sharing systems in tenanted lands range from 50-50 to 67-33 or 75-25.

After the landlord and tenant have received their respective shares of the harvest, it is then the merchant-usurers’ turn to appropriate their share from the farmer’s meager portion in the form of usurious interest rates on loans, high rental fees on farm implements and other excessive fees for the

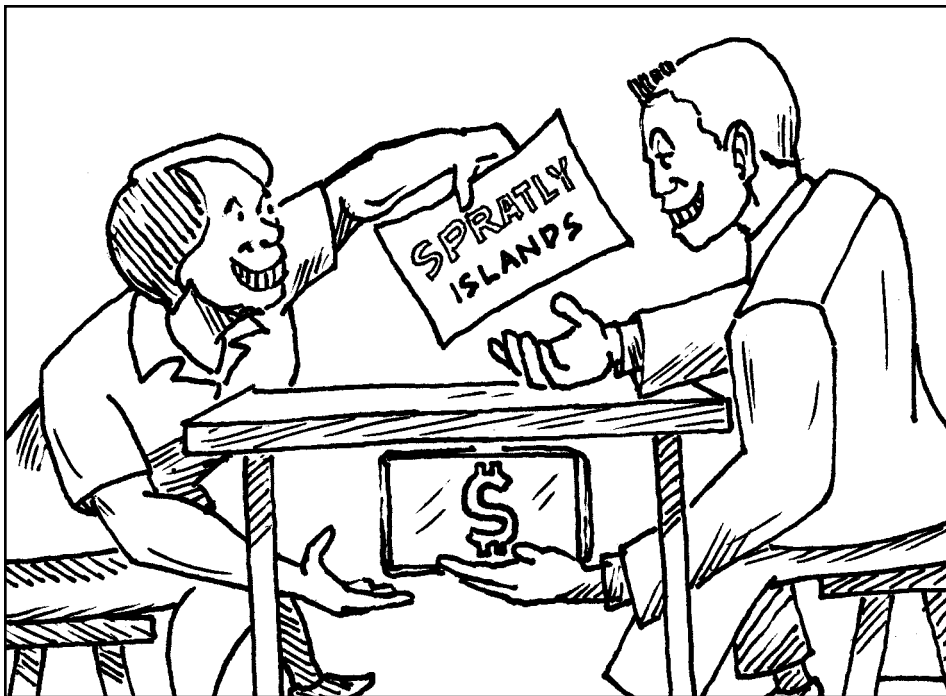
farmer’s production and consumption needs. At times, interest rates can go as high as 200% payable in five months. This woeful condition is aggravated by depressed farm-gate prices for the peasants’ crops.

A study on irrigated rice lands using traditional seed varieties reveals that after accounting for expenses on land rent, thresher rental, irrigation, tractor rental, pesticides, seeds, fertilizers and wages and food for farm workers, a peasant’s net take amounts to a measly ₱23.70 per hectare for a day’s labor. Comparatively, a landowner enjoys an income of ₱40 per day per hectare of tenanted rice land, assuming that his only source of income is land rent. The landlord earns much more if he also happens to own the farm implements rented by the tenant. (See graph)

The tenant’s income is further reduced and the merchant-usurers’ income correspondingly grows if the farmer uses the new hybrid seeds being promoted by the reactionary government. Production costs are considerably higher for these seeds because hybrids require much more fertilizers and pesticides.

AB





Fat bribes from China grease Arroyo regime's greedy hands

The giant bribery case involving the National Broadband Network (NBN) deal exposed last year is just one of the many anomalous contracts entered into by the Arroyo regime with the Chinese government and private Chinese companies. Aside from the now infamous NBN-ZTE project, there is the Northrail, Southrail and Cyber Education projects.

Additionally, there are 18 other projects pertaining to agriculture, irrigation, railroads, airports, sea-ports, highways, bridges, telecommunications, housing and economic zones signed in January 2007 during Chinese premier Wen Jiabao's visit to the country.

In the seven years since Arroyo's assumption to power, her regime has signed 65 agreements with the government of China in exchange for \$2 billion in loans annually until 2010. China is currently the Philippines' fifth biggest creditor. The number and size of these contracts are unprecedented compared to those signed by Arroyo's predecessors in Malacañang.

All in all, China and the Philippines signed 89 contracts from

1975-2007, of which 32 or more than 30% were inked in January 2007.

These agreements are decidedly unequal. The four agricultural agreements allow the utilization of at least 1.24 million hectares of land for the cultivation of various crops. There are also contracts for bio-ethanol production involving hundreds of thousands of hectares of agricultural land. Three joint venture deals on aquaculture production permit foreign businesses to encroach on municipal waters reserved only for small local fisherfolk.

The Arroyo regime has been kowtowing to the demands of the Chinese government in its pursuit of huge kickbacks. Among such de-

mands are the scrapping of House Bill 3216 or the Baselines Bill which defines Philippine territory with the goal of filing a claim at the United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS) in time for the May 13, 2009 deadline. Under House Bill 3216, the country's archipelagic baseline jurisdiction would cover part of the Spratly Islands lying within 200 nautical miles (or 379 kilometers) off the western Philippine coast. Such territory would also form part of the country's exclusive economic zone. Arroyo was worried that the bill would offend China as it runs counter to the Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking (JMSU) pact which she secretly entered into with China in 2004 and with Vietnam in 2005. The JMSU allows the signatories to the contract to freely conduct exploration activities to determine the extent of oil deposits in the Spratly Islands and in peripheral waters.

The agreements with China open both the country's land and territorial waters to unbridled foreign commerce. Many of the projects also encourage landgrabbing and land-use conversion that will worsen the plight of the impoverished peasant masses and aggravate the hunger that is already widespread in the country.

The Arroyo camp is hell-bent on forging economic pacts with China because these agreements provide excellent opportunities for corruption. Unlike loan agreements with the US, Japan, the European Union and the IMF-WB that have numerous requirements, China agrees to make bilateral agreements secret and has made it its policy to provide huge kickbacks to government officials. In the scuttled NBN-ZTE project alone, for instance, up to \$170 million worth of kickbacks went to the Arroyo couple and their cronies. **AB**



Soldiers kill fisherman

Elements of the Philippine Navy killed a fisherman in Zamboanga City this June while a pastor and a peasant leader were abducted and tortured in two separate incidents in May. These atrocities add to the growing number of human rights violations perpetrated by the Arroyo regime.

June 3. Philippine Navy elements on patrol gunned down a fisherman off the island of Tumulutap in Zamboanga City. In a related incident, government soldiers arrested that same day 10 fisherfolk in the coastal barangay of Taluksangay in the same city.

Pamalakaya denounced the incidents and demanded an immediate investigation by the Commission on Human Rights. Pamalakaya said that the victim from Zamboanga City is the 22nd fisherman killed since Gloria Arroyo occupied Malacañang in 2001. Seven of the fisherfolk victims were Pamalakaya regional and provincial leaders.

May 18. Three military elements in civilian clothes abducted Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas organizer Bernadith Dignos in Lanao del Norte. Dignos, 26, who was snatched in front of Mr. Beefy Burger in Iligan City, was surfaced after five days. She is currently being detained for rebellion at the Misamis Occidental provincial jail.

May 6. Military forces abducted Pastor Rodel Canja in Tanay, Rizal while he was on his way to the annual meeting of the Northeast Southern Tagalog Conference of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

He was forced into a van, after which his abductors pointed a gun at him and covered his nose with a wet handkerchief that rendered him unconscious.

He suffered severe psychological torture. While being interrogated, he was subjected to Russian roulette, and told that his siblings and parents would be killed should he refuse to collaborate with the military. At one point, a gun barrel was forced into his mouth while he was being coerced into admitting that he and fellow pastor Berlin Guerrero were members of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Pastor Guerrero was illegally arrested in May 2007 and remains in detention to this day.

AB



Armed actions by the NPA

Five enemy soldiers were killed and eight wounded in separate military actions initiated by the New People's Army (NPA) in Sorsogon, Negros Oriental, Davao Oriental, Davao del Sur and Nueva Ecija from the last week of May to the first week of June.

June 5. Five elements of the Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) were seriously wounded after being hit by a command-detonated land mine while on patrol in Barangay Dongan Pekong, Matanao, Davao Oriental.

June 4. Three military elements belonging to the 7th Scout Ranger Company were killed in an ambush staged by an NPA team in Sitio Macabalo, Barangay Bacalon, Magallanes, Sorsogon. The enemy soldiers who were riding a motorcycle were headed back to their headquarters in Barangay Tula-tula when the ambush took place. A .45 cal pistol was seized in the assault.

Meanwhile, a CAFGU element was wounded in a harassment operation conducted by Red fighters on a military detachment in Barangay Binolbohan, Guihulngan City, Negros Oriental. The enemy soldiers were currently conducting intense military operations in the area when the harassment occurred.

June 3. A government soldier belonging to the 78th IB was killed and another one wounded when the military raided a suspected NPA camp in Sitio Avocado, Barangay Talalak, Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental.

Meanwhile, the police chief of Boston, Davao Oriental identified as P/Insp. Jonnel Belenson was killed in an ambush conducted that same day by Red guerrillas. Belenson, along with two other policemen were ambushed while on their way to the town center. Belenson's companions were captured, investigated by the NPA and eventually released after a few days.



May 26. In Nueva Ecija, 73rd Division Reconnaissance Coy (DRC) chief Lt. Hector de Leon was wounded in an encounter with an NPA team in Sitio Kabilogan, Rio Chico, General Tinio. The combined forces of the 73rd DRC, Philippine Army Intelligence Group and the General Tinio

PNP were conducting military operations when the incident occurred.

AB



NPA steps up tactical offensives to counter intense militarization in Northern Samar

At least 15 enemy soldiers were killed and an undetermined number were wounded in successive tactical offensives by the New People's Army (NPA) in Northern Samar. The NPA offensives were in response to the massive military operations being conducted by the AFP both in Northern Samar and neighboring provinces, in the vain hope of defeating the armed revolutionary movement in Samar island before the end of 2008.

A people's campaign to oppose militarization is likewise being launched by the residents to condemn the gross human rights violations being committed particularly in the hinterland towns of Las Navas and Catubig. Villagers have been forced to flee their homes due to the military's brutality. Some villages have reportedly been declared by the military as "no man's land", where any person or animal chanced upon by the enemy is

shot.

Following are preliminary reports gathered by *Ang Bayan*:

May 15. Eight government soldiers were killed while no casualty on the side of the Red fighters was incurred in an ambush conducted by an NPA unit under the Rodante Urtal Command (RUC) of Northern Samar against operating troops of the 63rd IB Charlie Coy. The ambush took place between Barangay

Imelda and Cato-toogan in Las Navas at around 12:00 noon.

That same day, an NPA unit under the Sylvio Pajares Command of Front 4-Northern Samar ambushed 63rd IB Bravo Coy troopers between Barangay

Bato and Bangon, Gamay town in the same province at around 3:30 p.m. Four military

troopers were confirmed dead

while a Red fighter was wounded.

April 29. A partisan team under the RUC threw a home-made grenade at the provincial police headquarters in Catarman, capital of Northern Samar. The grenade attack produced a loud explosion but the police forces denied the incident, saying the roaring sound came from an electric transformer that exploded inside the headquarters compound.

April 19. An NPA squad inflicted an undetermined number of casualties on enemy soldiers after a harassment operation on the 20th IB Charlie Coy in Barangay Trojillo, Bobon, Northern Samar. The military elements were then in formation and preparing for their morning exercises when the attack was executed.

April 12. Enemy soldiers suffered an undetermined number of casualties from a harassment operation carried out by an RUC unit against the 52nd IB company headquarters in Barangay Salvacion, San Isidro, Northern Samar.

Two soldiers of the 20th IB were also killed in a harassment operation by the Nida Cantong Command of Front 3-Northern Samar in Barangay McKinley, Catarman in April.

March 2. Sgt. Nandy Nier, a death squad leader and a 20th IB intelligence officer was meted the death penalty in Barangay Balite, San Isidro, Northern Samar. Nier was responsible for the murders of four local farmers from 2007 to 2008. One of his victims was Tony Jumadiao, a resident of Kilometro 11, Happy Valley, San Isidro. **AB**





NPA successfully completes politico-military training in Southern Tagalog

The New People's Army (NPA) and the revolutionary movement in Southern Tagalog continue to grow and gain strength despite the intensity and viciousness of Oplan Bantay Laya II. A testament to this fact was the successful conclusion of a politico-military training undertaken from the end of February to the first week of April, amid relentless AFP military operations. Twenty new graduates coming from different lines of work completed the training, nine of whom were being trained as officers and regular NPA fighters. New instructors were also trained, including new military trainers. Four of the trainers were women.

The Basic Politico-Military Training Course is undergone by all new fighters or trainees of the NPA. The course is divided into theoretical and practical components. The theoretical part contains a study of the Specific Characteristics of Our People's War, orientation basics such as military regulations, mass work in the countryside and guerrilla tactics, among others. Also included in the theoretical studies are analyses of offensive and defensive actions and knowing the enemy. Combat maneuvers and individual trainings, on the other hand, also have both theoretical and practical components.

Regular morning exercises served to prepare the trainees for the practical part of the instruction. The first weeks were devoted to theoretical studies. The practical sessions were begun after the trainees were deemed ready for the practical part of the course.

The Red fighters were in the middle of the training when enemy soldiers arrived in the area and began regular and intense opera-

tions. To adjust to the situation, the practical components were completed ahead, particularly the obstacle course, so that the structures that had been set up could easily be torn down and the trainees could easily shift to another training ground if need be, without leaving any traces.

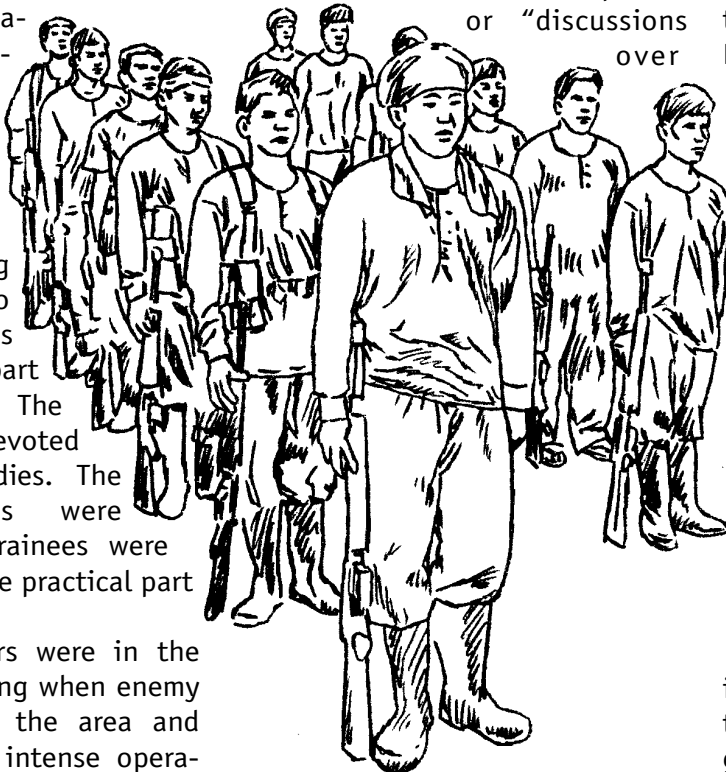
In spite of the tight situation, the comrades still found time for breaks to rest, have fun and mingle with fellow comrades. Evenings were used for "kapihan" or "discussions over

cups of coffee." Here, comrades had the opportunity to get to know other comrades and discover each other's thoughts and feelings through discussions, songs and play, among others. They also watched documentaries and other videos. Break time was also used to accomplish the assignments handed out by the instructors.

The training could not have concluded successfully without the tireless support of the peasant masses around the camp. The masses helped in the preparations and activity proper and served as the comrades' eyes and ears during the training that lasted almost two months.

The Red fighters profusely thanked the masses for all their efforts during the graduation program launched simultaneous with the 39th anniversary of the New People's Army. The graduates rendered presentations based on what they learned during the training.

The 20 Red fighters who completed the training this March in Southern Tagalog were just a few among thousands of fighters undergoing the same training nationwide. This is living proof that the armed revolutionary movement continues to gain strength across the country. **AB**



Thousands accompany Ka Bel to final resting place

Tens of thousands of people escorted Anakpawis Rep. Crispin "Ka Bel" Beltran to his final resting place on May 28. Ka Bel's remains were first brought to Taft Avenue, Manila, and then to the historic Mendiola bridge and House of Representatives before finally being brought to the Angels of Meadows Memorial and Nature Park in Angat, Bulacan.

Aboard a 10-wheeler truck, Ka Bel's body was brought to Mendiola by hundreds of workers, who in their collective class anger destroyed and threw away the flowers sent by Malacañang.

At the Congress session hall, fellow solons paid tribute to Ka Bel before hundreds of workers present at the gallery. Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo read his eulogy to Ka Bel that was concluded with roaring chants of "The fight goes on, Ka Crispin Beltran." "Raise our wages, ₱125." Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza, Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño and other progressive representatives also paid tribute to the late lawmaker. A number of congressmen, including pro-administration solons, also attended the wake.

About 20,000 people marched from the House of Representatives in Quezon City to SM Fairview in

Novaliches. Most of them wore black and red shirts as a sign of mourning and protest. They shouted "Congressman Crispin Beltran, the fight goes on!"

People went out and lined the streets to pay their respects to the hero of the toiling masses and the Filipino people. A number of houses were decked with red ribbons. "We offer our condolences. He fought for poor people like us," said an automotive mechanic from Litex, Payatas, Quezon City.

From Fairview, Ka Bel's remains were accompanied by a convoy of over 300 buses, jeepneys, trucks and motorcycles towards Angat, Bulacan.

Overseas, around 200 migrant workers in Hong Kong gathered and held a vigil in front of Alexandra House in Chater Road in Hong Kong on May 25. Filipinos in Canada and the US likewise conducted similar activities to give their last respects for Ka Bel. The evening of May 26 at the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) became a night of singing and poetry and a celebration of Ka Bel's memory. Among the foreign visitors who attended the wake were Cuban ambassador to the Philippines Jorge Rey Jimenez and Venezuelan Chargé d'affaires Manuel Perez Iturbe.

Militants denounce belated suspension of tuition fee hikes

VARIOUS student groups deplored the Arroyo regime for its hypocritical and overly delayed appeal to state colleges and universities to suspend tuition fee increases.

The National Union of Students of the Philippines said that a number of students had already enrolled when Arroyo issued her call.

The students believe Arroyo issued the appeal as a mere publicity gimmick in the face of the numerous controversies surrounding her. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has admitted that tuition fee hikes in private schools could no longer be deterred, as these are allowed by law. More than 370 schools across the nation have raised tuition fees by at least 10%.

According to Kabataang Pinoy, even if no tuition fee hikes are imposed, many schools raise "miscella-

neous fees" instead. Expenses that should be shouldered by schools are passed on to the students. The student group cited as examples AMA Computer University which collects postal, Smart and copier fees; Trinity University of Asia which collects power charge fees; the University of Cordilleras which charges a land infrastructure maintenance and acquisition development fee; the Technological University of the Philippines which collects accreditation fees; and Aquinas School which imposes a pre-registration fee.

Last year, Cavite State University students were made to pay ₱1 every time they used the toilet. The Asian School of Arts and Sciences, on the other hand, collects a ₱250 athletics fee even though the school does not have a varsity team. These are but some of the cunning ways schools employ to raise their profits.

Dutch court unfreezes NDFP bank accounts

THE District Court in The Hague, The Netherlands ordered on June 5 the lifting of the freeze order on bank accounts of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and its officers and staff. Dutch courts froze the accounts following the arrest of Jose Maria “Ka Joema” Sison and raids on the NDFP office and the houses of NDFP officers and staff in August 2007.

Sison was arrested based on trumped-up charges implicating him in the deaths of Romulo Kintanar and Arturo Tabara. Kintanar

and Tabara were revisionist renegades facing grave criminal charges before the revolutionary people’s court. They were killed while resisting arrest by teams of the New People’s Army tasked by the people’s court to carry out the arrest order.

The various Dutch courts that have reviewed the fabricated cases filed by Dutch prosecutors against Ka Joema all ruled that evidence against Ka Joema was insufficient and ordered his release.

NDPF officials and staff, includ-

ing Luis Jalandoni, Coni Ledesma, Fidel Agcaoili, Dan Borjal, Jose Maria Sison and Juliet de Lima-Sison have issued a statement calling the decision to freeze the NDFP’s bank accounts “unjust” as the accounts have nothing to do with the charges filed against Ka Joema.

Jalandoni also demanded the immediate return of all documents and equipment confiscated from the NDFP. The Dutch police has not returned important documents to this day.

Nepal dissolves monarchy

THOUSANDS of people marched on May 28 in the streets of Kathmandu, Nepal’s capital to celebrate the end of the monarchy in the country. The decision was made by the Constituent Assembly of Nepal that was formed to draft a new constitution for the country.

Only four of the assembly’s 601 members voted against the dissolution of the monarchy. The termination of the monarchy is a victory of the Nepali people led by the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M), which won the majority seats in the Constituent Assembly in elections held in April.

The Constituent Assembly declared Nepal a secular and democratic republic, effectively ending the 240-year rule of the monarchy and the Hindu religion.

“The king’s privileges will automatically end,” the assembly declared. The assembly likewise ordered former King Gyanendra and his family to vacate the palace within the next two weeks. The declaration allows the king to remain in Nepal as an ordinary citizen.

Meanwhile, the CPN-M, being the dominant party in the Constituent Assembly, is now demanding that it hold the presidency and prime ministership of Nepal. G.P. Koirala of the Nepali Congress party currently holds the two positions. The CPN-M warned of broad mass actions if Koirala does not immediately tender his resignation.

109 countries ink pact vs cluster bombs

ONE hundred and nine countries signed an accord on May 28 prohibiting the use of cluster bombs. The agreement was signed after a ten-day conference in Dublin, Ireland.

The biggest producers and suppliers of cluster bombs—the US, Russia and China—opposed the treaty. A cluster bomb scatters bomblets when dropped from the air. The use of this type of bomb has been criticized due to the danger it poses to civilians.

Cluster bombs have been used in wars in Cambodia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon.